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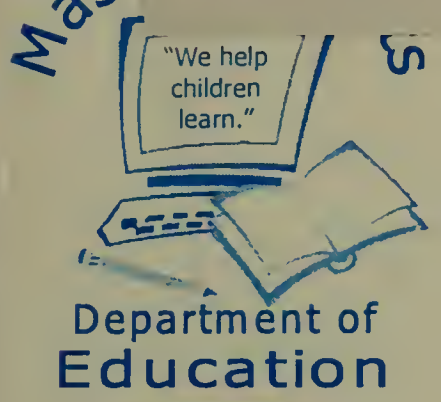

Department of Education

The Massachusetts Department of Education State Plan for Professional Development

1998-1999

Massachusetts Department of Education
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The Commonwealth of Massachusetts
Department of Education

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David P. Driscoll
ommissioner of Education (Interim)

July 1998

Dear Colleagues:

The Department of Education is pleased to present the annual State Plan for Professional Development, officially approved by the Massachusetts Board of Education in June, 1998. The Education Reform Act of 1993 directs the Department to prepare an annual plan for providing statewide assistance in the preparation and implementation of professional development plans. The actions in the Plan are intended for all providers of professional development including schools, districts, higher education institutions, associations, others and the Department as we plan for the 1998-1999 school year.

The Education Reform law also requires districts to adopt and implement districtwide professional development plans on an annual basis. This year the Department is collecting those plans as an eligibility requirement for entitlement grants so that we may prepare to provide assistance to districts on professional development planning connected to district and school improvement goals and the goals of Education Reform.

Several grant opportunities for 1998-99 provide resources to address the priorities in the State Plan. Additionally, the Department intends to make competitive Goals 2000 grant funds available in the fall for school-based professional development programs that will assist groups of educators to improve instruction to meet the identified learning needs of their students. Goals 2000 funds will also be available for District Improvement Plan grants for those districts with significant numbers of students identified as failing or in need of improvement on the MCAS. I invite you to join us as partners in this Plan, and thank you for your participation.

Sincerely,

David P. Driscoll
Commissioner of Education (Interim)

Massachusetts Professional Development: Background

At the national, state, regional, and local levels across the country, educators, parents, elected officials, business people, and others are engaged in work on educational standards. Rigorous learning and performance standards for students, teachers, schools and school districts have gained national attention and support.

In Massachusetts, former Governor Weld and now Governor Cellucci, as well as the Legislature, have consistently supported high education standards through their commitment to Education Reform goals and full funding since 1993. The FY '98 state budget required districts to spend $75 per pupil from state aid funds on professional development; the FY '99 budget may increase this amount to $100 per student. These funds can be used for tuition, conference fees, contracted services, stipends, salaries and materials.

A comprehensive statewide system of professional development, supported by the Education Reform Act, is needed in Massachusetts. Educators at the local, regional, and statewide level are beginning to engage in professional development that goes beyond traditional training practices to increase their subject-matter knowledge and address the identified learning needs of students.

The success of Education Reform depends on good instruction that leads to high levels of student academic achievement. The educational achievements and progress of Massachusetts' students will be assessed on their knowledge of core subjects, and the students, their teachers and schools will be held accountable. School committees and superintendents need to ensure that their district professional development plans and offerings focus on increasing teachers' content knowledge and on school and district improvement goals. Districts need to align their instructional practices with the learning standards in the state frameworks. Educators need to continue to increase their content knowledge in the academic areas for which they are responsible.

The Massachusetts Department of Education is focusing its work on helping educators and communities across the state to use the state curriculum frameworks and thereby to prepare students for the Massachusetts Comprehensive Assessment System and for using its results to improve student learning. Additionally, the Department is working toward developing a coherent statewide system of professional development that will improve educator content knowledge and student achievement at every grade level. The Department and Board will revise Recertification regulations and standards for educators' performance evaluations to reflect rigorous standards for evaluation and performance, analyze district professional development data and establish core standards for professional development, and continue to offer statewide content institutes to assist educators in further expanding their knowledge of subject matter.

Massachusetts Professional Development: The State Plan

The Massachusetts State Plan for Professional Development supports the implementation of the state curriculum frameworks through standards-based curriculum, instruction, and assessment practices. It is based on the premise that high quality professional development is essential to the reform of public education and to the improvement of student learning.

In this Plan, the Massachusetts Department of Education has identified three priorities for local, regional and statewide professional development. These priorities are crucial to creating a professional community that is ready to support and increase student achievement (Hawley & Valli, 1996; Joyce and Showers, 1995; Little, 1995; Newmann & Wehlage, 1995; Darling-Hammond, 1996). The Plan encourages districts and professional development providers to focus their staff development resources, structures, time and funding on the following priorities:

- expanding educators' knowledge of subject matter;
- increasing teachers' knowledge of standards-based curriculum, instruction, and assessment; and
- analyzing and reducing the gap between goals for student achievement and students' actual progress.

The State Plan also encourages the alignment of local, regional, and statewide programs to provide a coherent professional development system that will improve educator content knowledge and instruction at every grade level. The Plan promotes opportunities for the exchange of ideas within and among systems and recognizes the overlapping and different needs of preservice, beginning year, and veteran educators. The Plan recognizes that it is essential to develop quality professional development programs that are integrated into systemwide and school improvement planning. Education Reform requires administration and teacher leadership, management and school councils, strategic planning, community partnerships, and substantial fiscal and legal responsibilities.

Additionally, the State Plan offers guidance to districts as they prepare annual professional development plans that address the identified learning needs of their students. While this plan identifies priority areas to be used in framing effective professional development, it is the responsibility of local school districts to direct and monitor achievement through systematic planning and assessment.

The National Governors' Association Report, entitled "Transforming Professional Development for Teachers: A Guide for State Policymakers," says:

> *The critical tests for all professional development activities should be: Are they intellectually challenging, do they add to the participants' repertoire of skills and content knowledge, do they enhance their contributions to the school community, and do they lead to improvement in teaching practice?*
>
> *--National Governors' Association Report*

These questions serve as a guide as we work together to strengthen district and school improvement planning by addressing excellent, knowledgeable instruction and high levels of student learning and achievement.

Massachusetts Professional Development: Strategic Goals

The State Plan for professional development focuses on five strategic goals in three priority areas:

(1) Expanding Educators' Knowledge of Subject Matter,

(2) Increasing Teachers' Knowledge of Standards-Based Curriculum, Instruction, and Assessment, and

(3) Analyzing and Reducing the Gap between Goals for Student Achievement and Students' Actual Progress.

Actions for the Department, districts, professional development providers and institutions of higher education are listed under each goal.

1. Expanding Educators' Knowledge of Subject Matter

Since 1993, the Massachusetts Board of Education, through the state curriculum frameworks, has been establishing learning standards for students in the six subjects identified as core subjects by law: English language arts, history and social science, mathematics, science and technology, foreign languages, and the arts. The Board also developed a framework in comprehensive health education. A great many teachers are now being asked to teach substantial content without ever having studied it in depth themselves. Educators need added study and learning in their subjects so they can meet these new expectations.

Strategic Goal:

Design, implement, and assign first priority to programs for educators' study and further learning in the academic disciplines and subjects for which they are responsible.

Actions:

- Design and implement professional development programs for preservice and practicing educators that focus on the content of various disciplines and subjects.
- Collaborate with higher education institutions and others to develop professional development programs in which scholars and lecturers assist teachers in increasing their depth of content knowledge.
- Create professional development programs that provide middle and high school educators opportunities to become true scholars in their subject area.
- Support early childhood and elementary teachers in learning the content of each core subject area.

2. *Increasing Teachers' Knowledge of Standards-Based Curriculum, Instruction, and Assessment*

Using the Massachusetts curriculum frameworks, teachers are expected to teach substantial content in effective ways, and many must teach in ways that they have never themselves learned. Professional development must support and expand teachers' instructional repertoires as they help students learn subject-matter content.

Strategic Goal:

Design, implement, and support high quality professional development programs that promote effective standards-based curriculum, instruction and assessment practices.

Actions:

- Design and implement professional development programs for teachers and administrators that address the identified learning needs of students.
- Collaborate with higher education institutions, associations, and qualified individuals to plan and implement preservice and professional development programs that focus on improved student learning.
- Use the Internet, the Department's website (http://www.doe.mass.edu), distance learning, and the Technology Training and Professional Development System (http://ttpd.doe.mass.edu) to provide professional development information and resources.

Strategic Goal:

Design and implement professional development programs for educators that focus on instructional practices that help students learn subject area content in depth.

Actions:

- Develop professional development programs that enable teachers to deliver instructive lectures and engage students in substantive and extended classroom conversation and dialogue about subject matter.
- Design and offer professional development programs that provide teachers with methods to involve students in applying information and ideas by synthesizing, generalizing, explaining, hypothesizing, and reasoning soundly.
- Create professional development programs that assist educators in learning central ideas of a subject or discipline with sufficient thoroughness to address complex topics and problems effectively.

3. *Analyzing and Reducing the Gap Between Goals for Student Achievement and Students' Actual Progress*

Massachusetts' educators, through the core knowledge and learning standards identified in state curriculum frameworks, have begun to identify what students should know and be able to do. Student achievement will be assessed on knowledge of content in core subjects identified by law. As educators assist students in learning subject area content, they must be able to analyze and reduce gaps between the goals of instruction and students' achievement of those goals.

Strategic Goal:

Create professional development programs which enable teachers to analyze and reduce gaps between goals for student achievement and students' actual progress.

Actions:

- Provide professional development on the effective use of student and school assessment data.
- Use student and school assessment data to identify educators' training needs and build professional development programs that address those needs.
- Provide technical assistance to districts on the design, implementation, and evaluation of quality professional development programs for teachers and administrators focused on the identified learning needs of students.

Strategic Goal:

Provide opportunities for teachers and administrators to learn effective practices of leadership in Education Reform.

Actions:

- Support professional development models that emphasize leadership by educators with advanced knowledge of subject matter content.
- Create and implement professional development programs that teach effective practices of leadership.
- Provide a program for beginning and veteran superintendents, principals and other administrators to expand their capacity to implement and guide others toward systemic approaches to Education Reform.

Roles and Responsibilities

Massachusetts Department of Education

The Massachusetts Department of Education is required by the Education Reform Law of 1993 to prepare an annual plan for providing statewide assistance in the preparation and implementation of district professional development plans. The Department annually develops a State Plan for Professional Development. The 1998 Plan identifies five strategic goals in three priority areas for local, regional, and statewide professional development.

The Department prepares an annual calendar of all DOE sponsored professional development opportunities. Professional development is offered at the state, regional, and local levels to teachers, administrators, school council members, parents, school committee members, community members and others.

Professional development grants and funding opportunities for schools and districts are annually disseminated through the Department's unified grant package.

Local Districts

Local districts are required annually to adopt and implement a professional development plan for all principals, teachers, other professional staff employed by the district, and school council members. Districts are also required to set forth a budget for professional development within the confines of the foundation budget. The plan should identify specific content to be addressed, including training in the teaching of the curriculum frameworks and other skills required for the implementation of the Education Reform Law, including participatory decision making and parent and community involvement (Massachusetts General Laws, Chapter 71, Section 38). Districts are strongly encouraged to connect professional development with continuous district and school improvement planning.

The proposed FY99 state budget requires districts to spend $100 per pupil from state aid funds on professional development. These funds may be used for tuition, conference fees, contracted services, stipends, salaries and materials. Districts are responsible for selecting providers of professional development that are of high quality and that address the identified learning needs in the district. Districts also identify the data to be collected on professional growth and on the quality and impact of professional development.

Local Professional Development Committees

Although not required by law, many districts form professional development committees that include administrators, teachers, parents and community members. This district-wide committee is responsible for assessing the professional development needs of professional staff members based on the identified learning needs of students and developing the district's annual professional development plan. The committee also ensures that there are strong connections between district and school improvement plans and professional development provides educators the opportunity to learn subject-matter content and effective practices that improve student learning and achievement. This group is often responsible for advising the school community on the professional development process, local guidelines and policies, and no-cost options to fulfill recertification requirements.

School Councils

The Education Reform Law requires school councils to annually develop School Improvement Plans. Schools are required to include professional development for school staff and allocation of professional development funds in the school budget in the school improvement plan. As student progress is a unit of accountability for schools, improvement plans must focus on meeting the identified learning needs of students. In systems with large minority populations, the professional development component should address the need for teachers' professional development on second language acquisition and working with culturally/linguistically diverse student populations.

Professional Development Providers

The primary mission of professional development providers is to assist teachers in gaining subject-matter mastery. Providers will strengthen educators' skills by offering professional development that increases educators' knowledge of subject matter and supports effective standards-based teaching, learning and assessment practices for all students. Professional development providers must also assist districts in integrating professional development into systemwide and school improvement planning.

Suggested Implementation Plan

1. Expanding Educators' Knowledge of Subject Matter

Strategic Goals for the Department of Education	Recommendations for Districts and Schools	Recommendations for Providers
Design, implement, and assign first priority to programs for educators' study and further learning in the academic disciplines and subjects for which they are responsible.	Identify the professional development needs of educators relative to the subjects for which they are responsible. Offer and/or make available professional development experiences and programs that provide educators with added study and learning in their subjects. Collaborate with higher education institutions and others to develop professional development programs in which scholars and lecturers assist teachers in increasing their depth of content knowledge. Support early childhood and elementary teachers in learning the content of each core subject area. Create professional development programs that provide middle and high school educators opportunities to become true scholars in their subject area. Evaluate the impact of professional development on teacher performance and student learning.	Design and offer professional development programs for preservice and practicing educators that focus on the content of various disciplines and subjects.

2. *Increasing Teachers' Knowledge of Standards-Based Curriculum, Instruction, and Assessment*

Strategic Goals for the Department of Education	Recommendations for Districts and Schools	Recommendations for Providers
Design, implement, and support high quality professional development programs that promote effective standards-based curriculum, instruction and assessment practices. Design and implement professional development programs for educators that focus on instructional practices that help students learn subject area content in depth.	Design and implement professional development programs for teachers and administrators that address the identified learning needs of students. Collaborate with higher education institutions, associations, and qualified individuals to plan and implement preservice and professional development programs that focus on improved student learning.	Use the Internet, the Department's website (http://www.doe.mass.edu), distance learning, and the Technology Training and Professional Development System (http://ttpd.doe.mass.edu) to provide professional development information and resources. Develop professional development programs that enable teachers to deliver instructive lectures and engage students in substantive and extended classroom conversation and dialogue about subject matter. Design and offer professional development programs that provide teachers with methods to involve students in applying information and ideas by synthesizing, generalizing, explaining, hypothesizing, and reasoning soundly. Create professional development programs that assist educators in learning central ideas of a subject or discipline with sufficient thoroughness to address complex topics and problems effectively.

3. *Analyzing and Reducing the Gap Between Goals for Student Achievement and Students' Actual Progress*

Strategic Goals for the Department of Education	Recommendations for Districts and Schools	Recommendations for Providers
Create professional development programs which enable teachers to analyze and reduce gaps between goals for student achievement and students' actual progress. Provide opportunities for teachers and administrators to learn effective practices of leadership in Education Reform.	Use student and school assessment data to identify educators' training needs and build professional development programs that address those needs. Support professional development models that emphasize leadership by educators with advanced knowledge of subject matter content.	Provide professional development on the effective use of student and school assessment data. Create and implement professional development programs that teach effective practices of leadership. Provide a program for beginning and veteran superintendents, principals and other administrators to expand their capacity to implement and guide others toward systemic approaches to Education Reform.

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Massachusetts Department of Education

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